

NSC BRIEFING

15 May 1957

INDIAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS

- I. In India's second nation-wide elections (Mar '57) Nehru's Congress Party retained its firm control over parliament, winning 365 of 488 seats. (In '52 election, 364 of 489).
 - A. Nevertheless, Congress's performance not encouraging.
 1. Although it won 65% of State assembly seats (68% in '52), it lost ground in 9 of the 13 States. Serious losses in important Bombay and Uttar Pradesh. Congress cut to small plurality in Orissa and lost control of Kerala.
 2. Congress won only 48% of 119,000,000 votes cast for parliament, 43% of 109,000,000 cast for state assemblies.
 - B. Congress popularity thus slowly slipping.
 1. Reasons: factionalism, laziness, failure to inspire people with sense of confidence.
 2. Though leaders imaginative and produce good programs, Congress rank and file fails to carry out high command's suggestions.
 - C. Times of India editor says Nehru deeply concerned.
- II. Communists made striking election gains.
 - A. Doubled share of popular votes, winning 12,000,000 votes for parliament (5,000,000 in '52) and 10,000,000 for state assemblies (4,500,000 in '52).
 - B. Now hold balance of power between Congress and rightist opposition in Orissa.

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- C. In Kerala, won 60 seats (35% of popular vote) against 43 for Congress (39% of popular vote).
 - 1. With support of five independents--more anti-Congress than anything else--have majority in 127-man assembly.
- III. In Kerala, Communists face substantial problems--a dense population, overcrowding on land, deficit food supply, few natural resources, little industry.
 - A. However, they evidently intend to operate cautiously, within limits of Indian constitution.
 - B. In bid for popular favor, they have cut their own wages, stayed eviction of peasants, declared war on corruption, solicited private capital for industrial development.
 - C. Popular opinion will probably give Communists a year to prove themselves better than Congress or Socialists in improving local conditions.
- IV. Congress, with firm control over parliament and most states, is in little danger of being ousted from power during next five years.
 - A. Its leaders are alive to the Communist problem.
 - B. Nevertheless, Communists will be major gainers from any future Congress losses.
 - 1. If they produce a semblance of progress in Kerala, they will gain national prestige.
 - C. They have now replaced Socialists as most important opposition party.